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ABSTRACT

Teaching students how to be intelligent newspaper readers and television watchers is one of the most useful and interesting ways to help them bridge their current and future lives and to understand the role of the news media in a democratic society. Understanding of the media is a prerequisite to effective citizen participation in politics and government. A basic knowledge of the institutions and processes of the U.S. political system provides a framework for an appreciation of the role of the news media. News events should not be taught in the abstract; but instead should be connected to students' daily lives. Civic education teachers should help students recognize limitations of the media in regard to the scope and depth of news coverage. This is best taught by using actual media materials in the classroom. An examination of the "NBC Nightly News" and the "USA Today" newspaper for the week of August 29-September 2, 1988, revealed eight themes that could be of interest to civic educators: (1) the political aspects of nonpolitical news; (2) the presence of politics and government in the daily life of the United States citizen; (3) politics and schools; (4) citizen participation in politics; (5) the agencies of governmental bureaucracy; (6) the courts as policy makers; (7) international news coverage; and (8) polls and other statistical data. Relevant examples of media coverage are given for each theme. Two examples of statistics from "USA Today" are provided. (PPB)

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A FUTURE FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

by Michael Nelson
Vanderbilt University

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A FUTURE FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

by Michael Nelson
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Civic education in the secondary schools has a number of important purposes, notably to impart: an understanding of the American constitutional system, an active awareness of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, a tolerance for those with whom one disagrees, an appreciation of those who are different, and an understanding of the world beyond the borders of the United States. I will not, in this paper, dwell on or even refer to all of these purposes, but my neglect of a topic should be taken as no measure of my regard for its continuing importance to Americans in the remaining years of the twentieth century and beyond.

I will, however, take note that civic educators face several especially difficult challenges in accomplishing the many and varied purposes that are pressed upon them. Like those who teach English, history, and other academic subjects, the substance of what civic educators teach may seem remote from the daily concerns and activities of most students. But like those who teach shorthand, auto mechanics, and computer programming, civic educators are teaching a set of applied skills, in this case, the skills of citizenship in a democratic society. The challenge is to train students for activities that are, for the most part, several years in the future.

Another challenge that civic educators face is to teach about politics and government in what the political scientist Harold Lasswell has called both its "manipulative" and its "contemplative" modes. In a democratic society, students must be taught how to participate in politics in ways that will effectively influence the government to respond to their own interests and to their conception of the public interest. (That's what Lasswell meant by "manipulative.") But they also must be taught to "contemplate" politics--to understand how the political system works and how it affects and can be affected by them.

To meet the challenges of secondary education for democratic citizenship requires that civic educators define (or, in the painful jargon of the social sciences, "operationalize") the challenges in ways that promise to be both useful and interesting to students. In this paper, I will argue that one especially useful and, I think, interesting way to do so would be to teach students to be intelligent newspaper readers and television news watchers.

This definition of purpose has several advantages. First, it promises to teach students in a way that can bridge their current and future lives. The news media are readily available to students and always will be. Habits formed and techniques developed in school promise to carry forth uninterrupted into adulthood. Second, newspapers and television are not just teaching aids, they are the "real thing." Whatever level of

civic activity students may rise to as adults, they will always have to rely on the news media for information.

Third, the news media are a subject that has to be taught in order to be understood well. As important as newspapers and television are to a democratic society, they seldom provide the background, perspective, or context necessary to make sense of the information they provide their readers and viewers. Typically, the daily news media describe the waves, not the ocean underneath--what is "new" since yesterday, not what is constant or evolving. They emphasize controversy, not consensus--not because (as is commonly charged) editors and reporters prefer bad news to good, but because they (and their audiences) seem to prefer excitement to calm. Less wittingly, the news media use terms and make references in their stories that are well known to journalists but unknown to or dimly understood by their readers and viewers. Thus, to teach students to be intelligent newspaper readers and watchers of television news is to fill a real gap in our political system.

Finally, the ability to discern how the system works is prerequisite to effective citizen participation in politics and government. The American constitutional system that was created at the Philadelphia convention of 1787 fragments power among the national government, fifty state governments, and literally thousands of local governments and also among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches at each of these three levels. If that were not complicated enough, public institutions have

become ever more varied and diverse during the two centuries that have passed since the Constitution was written, with the rise of executive bureaucracies at home and ever greater interdependence between the United States and foreign governments abroad. The citizen who wishes to "plug into" the political system on an issue of personal concern confronts a challenge not unlike that faced by the first-day-on-the-job telephone operator at an old-style hotel switchboard. Not just the news media, but the governments it covers must be decipherable if citizens are to make sense of this complexity.

GOALS

What does it mean to say that someone is an intelligent consumer of the news media? What does teaching students to make sense of what they read and see in the newspapers and on television involve?

First, students need to have enough understanding of how the basic institutions and processes of the American political system work so that when they read or see stories about the day's events, they have some framework in which to place those stories. A newspaper or television account of a bill going into a House-Senate conference committee, for example, will mean little to the student who is unaware of the main elements of the legislative process.

Obviously, students are not going to get the kind of background information they need to make sense of the news from the news itself. That information is contained in books,

videotapes, and other materials of the traditional civics curriculum. But to the extent that students are stimulated to learn about the legislative process by trying to understand what is actually happening with a real, contemporary bill that they are reading and hearing about in the news, they may succeed better than if they are taught "how a bill becomes a law" in the abstract.

Second, students should be taught to see the connection between news events and daily life--both how the news affects them, their families, and their communities and how they can affect the events that make news. What could be a duller subject for students than, say, state regulation of the insurance industry? Duller, that is, until the escalating costs of liability insurance threaten the high school's ability to field a football team.

Third, civic educators should help students to recognize the limitations of the news media. The familiar charge of many media critics is that newspapers and television have a political bias. (Some say it is a conservative bias, others a liberal bias.) Less arguably, the news media offer less than full coverage of topics such as international affairs and the lives of the poor in our own society. In addition to these limits to the breadth of newspaper and television coverage, there are limits to the depth of their coverage, namely, the amount of information that is presented in a story. Some of these limits are inherent in daily news media--the point for civic educators is not necessarily to

criticize newspapers and television as much as it is to teach students to be sensitive to the limitations of the information they are receiving.

Fourth, students in the classroom should be brought into physical contact with newspapers and television. They and their teachers should work not just with textbook examples but with the day's actual morning newspaper and videotapes of the preceding evening's network news program. Learning to become an intelligent newspaper reader and watcher of television news is a skill that students can develop and master in no better way than by doing.

METHOD

In order to convey some sense of what civic education through classroom study of the news media might involve, I gathered and reviewed a recent week's editions of a newspaper and a network news program to discover some themes that could be developed in the classroom. No elaborate (or even primitive) statistical analysis was performed. I simply read the papers and watched the news with an eye toward discerning what sorts of stories appeared most frequently, how adequately they were covered, and what limitations in media coverage seemed endemic. The purpose was to devise some early suggestions about what topics a civics curriculum that made use of the media in the classroom might include.

The Week

The week was August 29-September 2, 1988. Like any other

week, it was not "typical." One thing that made this particular week atypical is that the three constitutional branches of the federal government were for the most part dormant--the president was on vacation in California, the Supreme Court had not yet returned from its summer adjournment, and Congress was in the midst of one of its extended "district work periods." Two major airplane crashes demoted political news to second place during the week (although both crashes had political aspects). Surprisingly, though, the newspaper and television news program still were full of stories about government and politics, a phenomenon that could be explained only partly by the general election campaigns for president and Congress that already were well underway.

The Media

"NBC Nightly News" was the evening television news program I watched. For several years, a substantial plurality of Americans has told pollsters that they receive most of their news from television. Recently, NBC has had the most highly rated of the three network evening news programs, although by a much smaller plurality. "Nightly News" is not substantially different from its rivals on the other two networks--"CBS Evening News" and "ABC World News Tonight."

The newspaper I read, although only in part, was USA Today. Of the general interest newspapers that are distributed nationwide, it has the largest circulation, around 1.6 million. (The Wall Street Journal, a business-oriented newspaper, still

sells more copies.) More significant, perhaps, is the strong influence that USA Today has had on other newspapers that are published around the country. This is apparent not just in the increased use that state and local newspapers now are making of colorful weather maps and detailed sports statistics, but also the new emphasis on tightly written news stories, "positive news," extensive use of public opinion polls, and pictorial presentations of statistical data.

The part of USA Today on which I concentrated was the front page and what the newspaper calls the "second front page" (page 3 of the first section.) This was for the sake of manageability, not from any pretense of comprehensiveness. The other pages of the front section also are dominated by news of politics and government at the national, international, and state and local levels. These include a page called "Newsmakers," which offers brief news items on both political and nonpolitical public figures, "Electionline," "Washington and the World," "Across the USA" (brief items from each state and a comparative state story called "Statesline"), and the editorial and op-ed pages. Stories relevant to a civics curriculum also appear in the newspaper's "Money" section--the August 30 edition, for example, included coverage of Department of Treasury bill sales, corporate lawsuits to which the U.S. government was a party, the settlement of a price-gouging fine from the 1970s between the Department of Energy and Texaco, trade discussions between the United States and Japan, and Department of Commerce figures on home sales. On

August 29, a story appeared in the "Life" section that described the television networks' decision to shrink their programming standards divisions in view of the Federal Communications Commission's increasingly laissez-faire policy toward the broadcast industry.

One powerful limitation on any analysis of the news media that is based solely on "NBC Nightly News" and USA Today is that these are national media. More people watch local television news than the network news and many more people read state and local newspapers than read national newspapers. These local newspapers and television stations, quite naturally, pay much closer attention to politics and government at the state and local level than do the national media.

RELEVANT THEMES IN MEDIA COVERAGE

What themes emerged from my reading (or watching) and reflecting on one week's editions of USA Today and the "NBC Nightly News" that may be of interest to civic educators who see the value in trying to teach students to become intelligent newspaper readers and television news watchers? A few, whose purpose is to be suggestive rather than comprehensive. They are listed and discussed below.

The Political Aspects of Nonpolitical News

Citizens and the news media themselves often draw a distinction between political and nonpolitical news. Political news involves governments, politicians, treaties, bills, protests, issues, and the like. Nonpolitical news is everything

else--natural disasters, human interest stories, sports, culture, and so on.

Few news stories are completely nonpolitical, however. Indeed, some that may seem to be that way turn out on closer inspection to be primarily political. For example, one of the main news stories during the week of August 29-September 2 (it was the lead story in the Monday issue of USA Today and the two top stories on that night's edition of the "NBC Nightly News") was the crash of three Italian air force precision-flying jets in an airshow at a U.S. military base in West Germany. Media coverage emphasized the crash itself and the resulting deaths of forty-six spectators. But underlying the crash story were several political themes: West German resentment of low-flying U.S. military training missions over that country's soil, disagreement between the West German defense minister and the U.S. ambassador to West Germany regarding the continuance of air shows, U.S. military use of air shows to attract enlistments to the armed services, criticism by an American admiral of air shows as wasteful of time and money, and assurances by the Federal Aviation Administration that air shows in the United States are closely regulated for safety. One brief story on the aftermath of the crash in Tuesday's USA Today mentioned three U.S. government agencies and three national governments.

Another illustration of the political aspects of seemingly nonpolitical stories was the Florida lottery. The news media's spotlight was concentrated on the record-setting $54 million

dollars that would go to the person with the winning ticket. Only passing attention was given to the fact that lotteries are controversial state-run programs that raise revenue through voluntary participation by mainly poor and working class people. Similar treatment was given to another story: the devastating fires that were sweeping national parks in the western United States were covered mainly as natural disaster stories, although some mention was made in both USA Today and "NBC Nightly News" of complaints about the National Park Service's policy of letting "natural" fires burn themselves out with little human intervention.

Civics curricula traditionally have reinforced the often artificial separation between political and nonpolitical matters. A challenge for civic educators is to show students how pervasive the presence of politics and government is in public and even private life. The use of newspapers and television in the classroom offers an especially effective vehicle for doing so. One reward for those who make the effort: to the extent that students perceive that public affairs are not divorced from matters of more immediate concern to them, they are more likely to see the value in civic education.

Politics and Daily Life

To see the political aspects of presumptively nonpolitical news is, inevitably, to see the presence of politics and government in daily life. Awareness of the pervasiveness of

politics is important not just to enhance students' understanding of the world they live in, but also to engage their interest.

A few examples:

>A story in Monday's USA Today referred to the frustration that leaders and residents of several big cities were feeling over not having cable television. The story quoted representatives of a cable interest group and of the National League of Cities on the political obstacles they are facing in their efforts to "wire" the cities.

>A splendid report on the Monday edition of "NBC Nightly News" chronicled personal and political reactions to street begging. Several cities have passed laws against aggressive panhandling. Police in Nashville, Tennessee go undercover to keep street beggars away from tourists.

>On Thursday, NBC described a new law concerning check-clearing by banks that had gone into effect that day. The purpose of the law was to require banks to grant customers quick access to money they deposit in their accounts by check.

>Friday's USA Today reported on the changing policy of several southern state governments toward amateur hunting of alligators.

A common finding of all studies of voting is that young voters participate at a much lower rate than older voters. Because they are not taxpayers or parents (or so one explanation of this phenomenon has it) they do not yet see the intimate connection between their personal lives and the activities of

government. To the extent that civic educators can make students aware of those connections, they may help to remedy the turnout gap.

Schools and Politics

Yet another connecting thread that civic educators, using the daily media of journalism, can help students draw between themselves and the world of politics and government concerns the schools. During the week of August 29-September 2, USA Today ran stories on: teachers strikes in public school systems around the country, state and local government policies concerning AIDS education in the secondary schools, Department of Agriculture guidelines on school lunches, new political strategies that are being pursued by groups that want to remove certain books from public school curricula and libraries, the average salaries of school principals, and departing Secretary of Education William Bennett's farewell remarks about the adequacy of American public education. "NBC Nightly News" reported some of these same stories and also some others, including a speech on education policy by Democratic presidential nominee Michael Dukakis and a controversial decision (opposed by interest groups that represent the handicapped) by the Air Force Academy to expel a student who had lost the use of his legs in an automobile accident and who, as a consequence, no longer met the academy's physical requirements.

Most of the week's stories on schools and politics could be used by civic educators to serve two purposes. First, they

instruct students about the presence of politics and government in their own lives and the lives of their peers. Second, the stories offer a point of entry into broader questions concerning the American political system: What are the rights of public employees?; What role should the schools play in the effort to fight AIDS?; How can (and should) groups outside the school system influence the content of the school curriculum?; What place do departments of the federal government occupy in the school system?; How do presidential politics affect the lives of students?; and so on.

Citizen Participation in Politics

In a departure from the traditions of American politics, neither major party presidential candidate in 1988 waited until Labor Day to "kick off" the campaign. Both George Bush and Michael Dukakis campaigned furiously all during the week of August 29-September 2, and their speeches and appearances constituted the main explicitly political story in both USA Today and "NBC Nightly News."

The newspaper and network news coverage had little to do with the main themes of the traditional civics curriculum regarding citizen participation in politics, however. Neither USA Today nor NBC News had much to say about the substantive issues of the election, and still less about the roles of citizens as campaign participants. Instead, both concentrated their coverage overwhelmingly on the strategic aspects of the campaign--charges and countercharges by the candidates and their

staffs, tactical maneuvers by each candidate to go on the offensive and get off the defensive, carefully staged public appearances around the country, changes in campaign staff organizations, squabbles over the nature and frequency of presidential and vice presidential debates, success or failure in the polls, and so on.

Interestingly, much attention was given throughout the week to methods of citizen participation that enjoy a much less prominent place in the traditional civics curriculum than do elections. These ranged from protests and demonstrations (against abortion, against the construction of a shopping mall on the sight of the Civil War battlefield in Manassas, Virginia, against loud train whistles near a residential neighborhood, against expelling a handicapped student from the Air Force Academy, and so on) to lobbying efforts by the National Rifle Association and its opponents to petitions to put an initiative on the ballot in Oklahoma that would limit the length of the state legislature's sessions.

Several news stories in both media overlooked what must have been extensive citizen participation. NBC reported on Monday, for example, that a judge had ruled against a law that would have closed the Palestinian Liberation Organization's office in Washington. Clearly, pro-PLO citizens or groups had initiated or financed the lawsuit, but their role was not mentioned in the story.

Bureaucracy

Our present system of civics education, sticking as it does mainly to explications of the Constitution and the electoral process, teaches students little about how the bureaucratic agencies of the government work. This may help to explain a startling finding by the authors of The Civic Culture: although Americans ranked first among the citizens of the five democracies they studied in "civic competence"--the feeling that they could do something to prevent an unjust law from being passed--they ranked only third in "subject competence"--the "ability to appeal to a set of regular and orderly rules in their dealings with administrative officials." We do not teach subject competence in school, so it should not surprise us that adults later feel ignorant and overwhelmed when they have to deal with as many bureaucratic agencies as they do in the course of their daily lives.

Judging from the week's news coverage, the news media make no shortage of references to the bureaucracy. Here is a list of the federal departments and agencies that were mentioned at least once during the course of the week by either USA Today, NBC, or both:

Federal Aviation Administration

Department of Justice

Environmental Protection Agency

Department of Energy

Department of Commerce

Department of Education

National Transportation Safety Board

Bureau of the Census

Department of Defense

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Department of Labor

National Park Service

Department of Agriculture

Immigration and Naturalization Service

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Social Security Administration

Forest Service

Fish and Wildlife Service

Center for Disease Control

Occupational Health and Safety Administration

Frequent mention of bureaucratic agencies by the news media, however, does not translate into remotely adequate coverage. Although agency rules and procedures were the basis of numerous stories during the week of August 29-September 2--"Environmental Protection Agency bans factory construction in Los Angeles," "National Park Service reluctant to interfere with Yellowstone Park fires," "FBI announces affirmative action hiring plan for blacks and Hispanics," and so on--nothing was said about how these bureaucratic agencies operate, much less how citizens can influence their operations. In one especially remarkable case, NBC aired extensive reports on Thursday and Friday nights about a

Delta plane crash in Dallas. The reporter made reference to crash "investigators" thirteen times without once mentioning that the investigators were from the National Transportation Safety Board.

Courts as Policymakers

As with bureaucracy, civics curricula are generally insensitive both to the role of the courts as policymakers and to the ways citizens influence and are influenced by court decisions. As with bureaucracy, too, the news media abound with references to (unaccompanied by explanations of) policymaking by the courts. Viewers of the Tuesday edition of "NBC Nightly News," for example, were told simply that a judge had decided to permit Eastern Airlines to end its service to fourteen cities but not to lay off 4,000 workers. On Thursday and Friday nights, viewers heard references to a "court-appointed bankruptcy trustee" who was in the process of deciding whether PTL ministries should be sold to its defrocked ex-leader, televangelist Jim Bakker. Tuesday's USA Today mentioned that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (what's a court of appeals?; what's a circuit?; where's the ninth circuit?) had required U.S. government agents to obtain warrants to conduct searches even in countries that did not require warrants. In none of these stories was any explanation offered of the legal issues, the court procedures, or the judicial system that was involved.

International News

Nowhere is the challenge to civic educators to provide students with a context for making sense of the daily news greater than in international affairs. The world according to daily journalism is a congeries of violence and catastrophe, as evidenced by the complete roster of the stories about life outside the United States that appeared on "NBC Nightly News" during the week of August 29-September 2:

Monday: Controversy over air shows in West Germany in aftermath of plane crash

Violent demonstrations and political turmoil in Burma

Tuesday: Polish government seems to yield to Solidarity in face of strikes and demonstrations

Continuing controversy over air shows in West Germany

Soviet soldiers recapture a town from rebels in Afghanistan

More violent demonstrations in Burma

Vietnam will allow more searches for U.S. soldiers missing in action

Wednesday: Solidarity leader Lech Walesa asks end to strikes in Poland

Burmese government warns demonstrators to stop

Anti-apartheid headquarters bombed in South Africa

Thursday: Polish workers end strikes

Speculation in South Africa that black leader Nelson Mandela may be gradually freed from prison

Friday: Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan delayed in effort to repel rebels

Walesa seeks to negotiate with Polish government

Riot in Belfast in support of the Irish Republican Army

NBC's coverage of the world during week in question may not have been typical in the unrelenting nature of its emphasis on (seven) nations that were undergoing severe internal disruption. But the nature of daily journalism, if I may speak colloquially, is to run outside when it hears a loud noise to find out what is going on. Students should be taught to place such reporting in some sort of perspective.

Polls and Other Statistical Data

Every television network and nearly every major newspaper (often working in conjunction with each other) now conducts its own surveys of public opinion: the CBS/New York Times poll, the ABC/Washington Post Poll, the NBC/Wall Street Journal poll, the CNN/USA Today poll, and others. So do many smaller newspapers and local television stations. Even those that do not sponsor

polls frequently report the results of others' polls on their own pages or programs.

This proliferation of media-sponsored polls has occurred in less than a decade. Accompanying the trend has been an increased use of graphic presentations of other kinds of data both within news stories and in separate, self-contained "sidebars." In most cases, the news media attempt to present data in attractive, easily comprehensible ways. Sometimes they succeed, sometimes they do not. Sometimes, too, newspapers and television place so much emphasis on how data appear that necessary information is sacrificed.

Few things are more misleading than misleading statistics. The pretense of precision that statistical data convey make them all the more convincing, even when they are false or incomplete. Yet, abuses or shortcomings aside, journalism is enriched when it offers full and accurate data rather than sweeping generalizations or seat-of-the-pants assertions based on reporters' impressions.

How, then, to prepare students to approach data critically when they confront polls and other statistical information in the newspapers and on television--discerning what is valid, dismissing what is invalid, and discounting what is incomplete?

During the week of August 29-September 2, both USA Today and "NBC Nightly News" offered examples of statistical reporting at its best and worst. On Thursday, USA Today did a splendid job reporting and presenting Bureau of the Census data on changes in

poverty and income levels in the United States. As reproduced in Figure 1, the story, although brief, was thorough and clear; the accompanying graphs and tables were attractive and reasonably complete. Civic educators could make good use of stories such as this one in teaching students how to make sense of data that is presented in the daily news media. USA Today's report was all to the good, because the night before, NBC had offered a cursory story on the same Census Bureau report that, for example, described changes in the poverty rate without explaining what the poverty rate was.

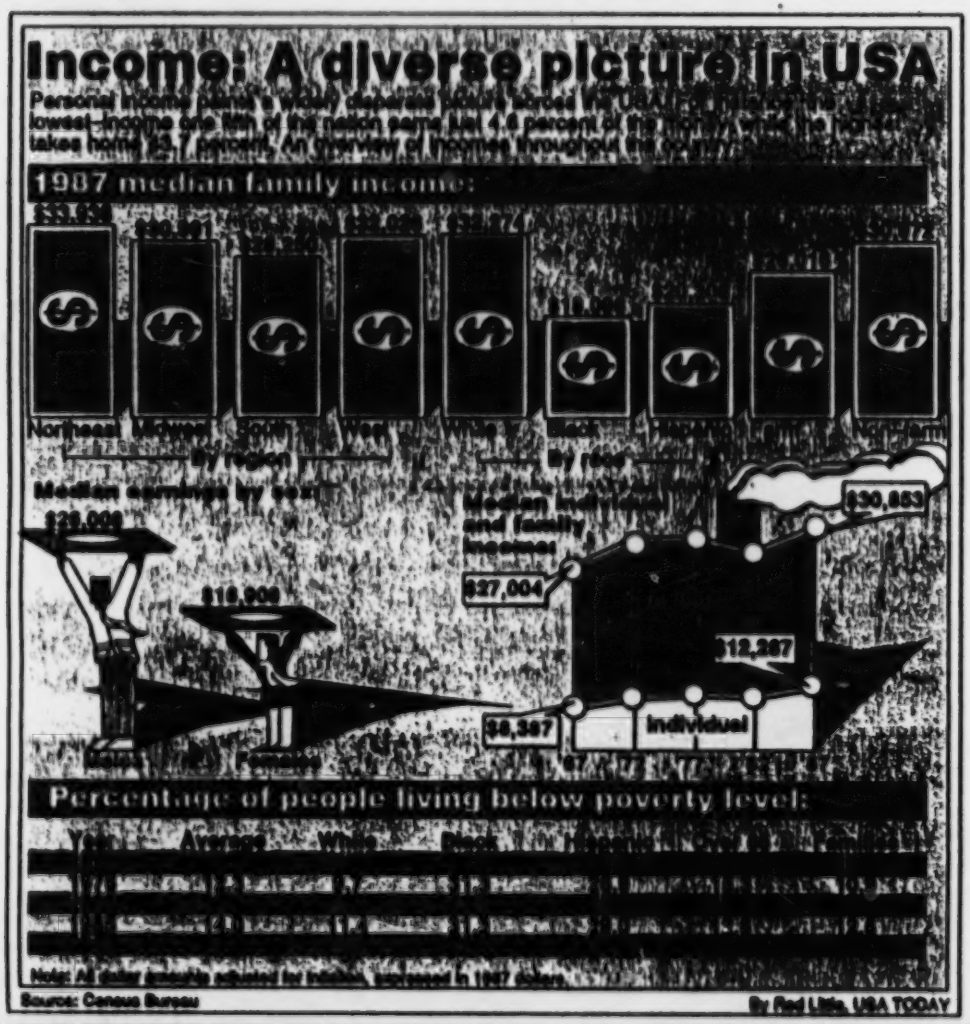
NBC redeemed itself on Friday, with a thorough, engaging explanation of the unemployment rate. The reporter explained just what this frequently-reported figure consists of, emphasizing the deliberate omission from unemployment data of "discouraged workers," that is, people who had stopped looking for work. For its part, USA Today, in a daily feature called "USA Snapshots" ("A Look at Statistics That Shape the Nation") that appears on the bottom-left corner of the front page, failed miserably in reporting the results of a poll on the "favorable ratings" of several major institutions. (See Figure 2). The poll, although attractively and wittily presented, is unrevealing as to: the size of the sample, the questions that were asked, the dates the poll was taken, the trends from earlier polls on the same issue, and other basic pieces of information. Media failures, like media successes, offer civic educators a useful tool for education in interpreting data.

CONCLUSION

The observations about the news media that are offered in this paper are designed to stimulate discussion, not conclude it. The suggestions for civic educators are illustrative, not comprehensive.

No such qualification is declared for my thesis, however. To teach students to become intelligent newspaper readers and television news watchers is to teach them a set of skills that are fundamental for democratic citizenship.

Income up; poverty level same



Fifth year of gains; 32.5M live in poverty

By William Dunn
USA TODAY

Family income nudged up 1 percent in 1987 and the poverty rate didn't change, the Census Bureau said Wednesday.

It was the fifth straight year for family income gains. At $30,853, the median family income — adjusted for inflation — equals the 1973 record high.

Still, 13.5 percent — 32.5 million — lived in poverty.

"The economic recovery is leaving many poor Americans behind," says Robert Greenstein of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

The poverty level for a family of four was $11,611 in 1987.

Black poverty remains high because of the high rate of single-parent families — 48 percent of black families.

Says Census' William Butz: "Since the late 1960s there has been a gradual decrease in the share of income that goes to the lowest 20 percent and the middle 60 percent."

But Stuart Butler of the Heritage Foundation says: "Fewer Americans are living in poverty than the numbers show," because the poverty statistics don't consider non-cash benefits such as food stamps and public housing.

Other 1987 median findings:

- Families headed by college graduates, $46,533; high school graduates, $29,937; less than eight years, $14,547.
- Female-headed families, $14,620, up 3.4 percent — first significant gain since 1984.
- Earnings of full-time working women are only 65 percent that of men. But since 1982, women's earnings have grown faster than men's, 10.4 percent vs. 4.8 percent.
- Forty percent of the USA's poor are children; 21 percent of children are poor — higher than for any other age group.

FIGURE 1

FIGURE 2